

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 SS-15 NSC-10 CPR-02 SY-10 OPR-02 RSR-01

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R 051220Z JUL 73

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2461

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 3901

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TS, US

SUBJECT: BOURGUIBA VISIT

REF: STATE 131167

1. PRIOR TO RECEIPT REFTEL, I HAD ALREADY DISCUSSED TIMING OF POSSIBLE PRIVATE BOURGUIBA VISIT TO U.S. WITH ABDELAZIZ GASSAB, HABIB CHATTI'S CHEF DE CABINET. WE HAD TENTATIVELY COME TO MUTUAL CONCLUSION THAT BECAUSE OF SCHEDULING DIFFICULTIES, IT MIGHT BE BEST TO WORK TOWARD SPRING 1974 VISIT--POSSIBLY MID-APRIL. UPON RECEIPT REFTEL, I TELEPHONED GASSAB MORNING JULY 5 TO ADVANCE POSSIBLE NOV 1 OR NOV 2 DATES. GASSAB THOUGHT THESE SOUNDED GOOD, AND SAID HE WOULD SEEK TO OBTAIN RESPONSE FROM CHATTI AND BOURGUIBA EVEN BEFORE THEIR RETURN TO TUNIS(THIS HAS NOW BEEN ANNOUNCED FOR JULY 10).

2. I ALSO RAISED MATTER DURING CONVERSATION JULY 5 WITH ACTING FORMIN MAHMOUD MESTIRI, WHO ALSO PROMISED GET IN TOUCH IMMEDIATELY WITH MASMOUDI (WHO STILL WITH BOURGUIBA IN GENEVA). MESTIRI ALSO RESPONDED FAVORABLY TO DATES SUGGESTED. HE THOUGHT CLIMATIC CONDITIONS WOULD BE FAVORABLE, AND THAT TIMING WOULD BE SUITABLE FOR BOURGUIBA'S RETURN IN TIME FOR KING BADOUIN VISIT BEGINNING NOVEMBER 6. MESTIRI FURTHER SPECULATED THAT BOURGUIBA MIGHT DECIDE TO ARRIVE IN NEW YORK SEVERAL DAYS EARLIER AND PERHAPS GIVE SPEECH AT UNGA BEFORE PROCEEDING WASHINGTON.

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3. WITH BOTH GASSAB AND MESTIRI, I STRESSED NEED FOR CLEAR UNDERSTANDING ON TERMS OF PRIVATE VISIT. I EXPLAINED THAT PRESIDENTS NIXON AND BOURGUIBA WOULD HAVE ONLY ONE MEETING TOGETHER AND THAT PRESIDENT NIXON WOULD GIVE DINNER IN BOURGUIBA'S HONOR. WE DID NOT WANT THE TUNISIANS TO BE DISAPPOINTED, AND THUS NEGATE THE PURPOSES OF THE VISIT. BOTH GASSAB AND MESTIRI INSISTED THAT THERE WAS NO PROBLEM ON THIS POINT.

4. WE WILL CONTINUE FOLLOW UP ON THESE PROPOSED DATES, BUT PRILIMINARY SIGNS SEEM ENCOURAGING. WE BELIEVE TENTATIVE PLANNING WITHIN DEPARTMENT COULD PROCEED ON BASIS THESE DATES. WE MAY NOT HAVE FINAL ANSWER, HOWEVER, UNTIL BOURGUIBA AND CHATTI RETURN ON JULY 10.
RELPH

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